

Sunset by crystalkei

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Summary:

Joyce runs into Hopper at the gas station.

“Oh come on,” he said, throwing a hand up. “I’m smooth. You just make me nervous. Always have.”

“I make you nervous?” She laughed again, the information lighting a spark in her chest.

Hopper smiled at her, it was almost smug but he looked down like he was embarrassed. He took a breath like he was gonna say something then paused, like he was choosing his words carefully and then regretting them before he even spoke them. “Fuck.”

“If that’s an invitation, it needs work.” Joyce looked up at him and caught the roll of his eyes before he pulled the cigarette from his mouth.

a birthday fic for emily <3

Sunset

Author's Note:

- For [ballroompink](#).

Joyce was standing outside the gas station, smoking. She could have started on her way home but the sky was that ombré of yellows and oranges, and that smudge of pink, that came with the sunset so she stood watching it for a minute instead of driving off.

The door behind her opened and Hop stopped right next to her. Joyce was enjoying the sunset, not looking for a way to stall and talk to him a few minutes more. It was the colors in the sky. Really.

"You look tired," he said, offhanded, lighting his own cigarette.

"Slow down there, Casanova." She gave him a sidelong glance and watched him sputter.

"No, I mean in a good way."

"That's not a thing."

"It's... You're-"

Joyce threw her cigarette butt to the ground and stamped it out, hiding her smile.

"How have you fucked half the town?" She laughed. "The women of Hawkins must be desperate if they're dropping their panties for you"

"Oh come on," he said, throwing a hand up. "I'm smooth. You just make me nervous. Always have."

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was embarrassed. He took a breath like he was gonna say something then paused, like he was choosing his words carefully and then regretting them before he even spoke them. “Fuck.”

“If that’s an invitation, it needs work.” Joyce looked up at him and caught the roll of his eyes before he pulled the cigarette from his mouth.

“Don’t know why I bother,” he muttered.

A truck with a couple of teenagers pulled up, blasting some band that Joyce vaguely recognized as something Jonathan listened to but she couldn’t place it. Hopper glared at the kids and they turned the music down but left the car running as they went inside.

“You like a challenge, that’s why you bother.” It was an educated guess since she didn’t know why he did what he did, he never explained himself. Even after all these months.

Hopper made a clicking sound and tilted his head, taking a step closer to her, but Joyce stepped back instinctively, almost falling off the sidewalk, but catching herself. She also caught Hopper’s raised eyebrow and half smile.

The teenagers’ music changed and Joyce’s face lit up, she looked over at the car and seeing the window was rolled down, she headed for the door. She leaned into the car through the open window and turned the volume up despite Hopper’s complaints.

“Why’d you do that?” he asked, when Joyce had worked her way back out of the car. He looked over his shoulder at the convenience store, checking if the teenagers were coming out.

“Calm down, they’re gonna be in there a few minutes,” she explained, starting to shimmy her hips, hopefully more confidently than she actually felt, but she could fake it.

Tina Turner belted out, “ *What’s love got to do, got to do with it?* ” and Hopper shook his head as Joyce lip synced along, moving closer to him.

“Those kids are gonna tell everybody about this. I know how you

hate being the talk of the town,” he said, but she caught him licking his lips, his eyes were definitely not on her face, but on her hips.

She did hate gossip that followed her around, but she knew those kids were in there pretending to buy slurpees, waiting for the Chief of Police to leave so they could con old Wilford into letting them buy beer. “They’re not paying attention.”

Joyce lifted her arms above her head and swayed to the music. Her shirt rode up and she felt the warm spring breeze across her middle. Joyce locked eyes with Hopper, coming closer to him. He swallowed and looked over his shoulder one more time, whatever he saw of teenagers must have been enough to propel him. His big hands were on her bare waist, calloused fingers caressing her skin, causing her to close her eyes, still trying to dance to keep up the rouse.

“We should go somewhere.” His voice was thick. “Your house, my house, my truck that’s 10 feet from here.”

Joyce opened her eyes and gasped in mock surprise but before she could let loose her snappy remark, he pulled her flush against him. She stood staring up at him, feeling him against her sent a jolt through her, and she tried to play it off, not wanting him to win.

He made a move to kiss her but she took a step back, despite his grip on her hips tightening.

“Fine,” he said, strained. “Let’s go before you start channeling Proud Mary.”

“Big wheel keep on turning,” she sang, walking backwards towards her car.

“So where?”

“Your house.” Joyce said, unlocking her car door. “The boys are home and I had a cramp in my leg for a week the last time we tried in your stupid Blazer. That shit is for teenagers like the ones hoping to buy booze after you leave.”

She gestured to the store front behind him with her chin and he looked back again.

“Can't do both, Chief, gotta pick.”

Hopper looked pained for a second and Joyce tried to hold back her laugh. He really loved busting kids for that crap.

“Tick tock,” she added, climbing into her car.

“Shit,” he said, with huff before heading to his truck to follow her.

“Good choice!”

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Joyce was surprised they'd made it all the way to the bed. When she pulled up, Hop opened her door, which she thought was chivalrous, until he grabbed her arm and practically dragged her out of the car towards the house. They'd made out against the kitchen counter and Joyce thought that might be the spot but just when she was considering lifting herself onto the counter, he'd tugged her towards the bedroom, stripping his clothes off and helping pull her's too as they went.

As he hovered above her, moving in and out, he didn't seem to be looking at her at all. Joyce slid her hand up his bicep, across his shoulder, then up his neck, and finally she brushed her fingers against his jaw and got his attention.

“You good?” he asked, tenderly.

It was a lot for her to process, the simple words packed a punch and she floundered before finally nodding and looking away herself. He leaned in and kissed the skin below her ear, the touch went straight through her and she moaned, tightening her legs around him, trying to pull him closer. Hopper laughed smugly against her skin. He ran a hand down her side and slipped it between them to rub slow circles against her clit.

Joyce cried out, falling over the edge with just a couple of strokes, he followed her, with a few choice profanities.

When she caught her breath, he was almost asleep next to her, an arm over his face and the other stuck to her thigh.

"Tell me that part about me making you nervous again," she prodded.

He croaked, low and annoyed.

"Aren't the boys expecting you home?"

"You're kicking me out? That's a turn of events I did not expect."

"I never should have said it."

"But you did."

He huffed, she felt him wiggling his toes and she saw him scrunch his face up a couple of times before he finally spoke. "It's not nothing."

"Huh?"

"This." He gestured vaguely to her. "It's not nothing and I don't want it to be nothing."

"I don't understand."

"It means something," he said, quieter, less sure. "It's not nothing, this means something to me and I don't want to fuck it up."

"You couldn't fuck it up if you tried," Joyce said without thinking, a smile on her face. "The whole point is fucking."

"That's the thing. It's not just fucking to me."

Oh.

Oh.

Oh no.

That's not what this was. Joyce didn't have time for anything other than sex. She didn't have the energy to give a relationship. She didn't have the stamina to add another person to her to do list.

Hopper caught on immediately to her silence and maybe the existential dread on her face.

"Never mind," he said, quickly, getting up to toss the condom in the trash.

She said nothing. How could she? Joyce was blindsided. She thought sleeping with Hopper would be easy and no strings attached because obviously the town's most eligible bachelor liked it that way. It was safe.

Sure, it'd been going on for months, sure he'd been subtly dropping hints that he wasn't seeing anyone else, but she wasn't paying attention. She honestly didn't care what he did with his time when they weren't screwing each other's brains out.

He walked by the bed, heading out of the room, but Joyce caught his wrist and he stopped, tilting his head in confusion.

"Sorry," Joyce said. "It's just scary. I've never thought about it and now it's kind of terrifying."

He paused and a slow, hopeful smile spread across his face. That wasn't what she was going for but it was nice to see his brow relax and the weight in his shoulders ease.

"Why?"

"Oh come on, your wife left you, don't you understand how this is all...how doing this all over again is scary?"

"I never said my wife left me."

"It's obvious."

He gave her a look but she gave him one right back,

"Lonnie left you. So there, we have that in common."

"Lonnie left me a hundred times. I'm the one that told him to get out for good. He'd have kept coming back. Hell, he tried it again when...You know."

"So if you're not scared of being left, what's the holdup?"

"You were choosing your words very carefully, I can't be the only one hesitant about this."

"Telling you that this isn't just sex was scary, but it's out there now and I'm feeling okay." He leaned down, covering her body now, resting on his elbows to stay above her. "I'm not scary, am I?"

"As a person?" Joyce laughed. "No. Not to me anyway."

"I scare a fair number of idiot teenagers, or at least that's what I'm going for." He pushed some hair off her forehead. "So what is it?"

Joyce worried her bottom lip, if they were doing this, might as well be honest. She reached up and moved her thumb against the grain of his whiskers on his chin.

"I don't have time. I don't have any idea how to tell my kids. What if everything goes sideways and you resent me? God, what if you want more kids? I don't want more kids. What if a monster takes you away in the middle of the night and I'm left with nothing?"

"Hey, hey." He kissed her gently, like he wasn't sure what to say. "We'll figure it out."

"That's it?" she asked, incredulous. "That's all you got? That's a terrible plan."

"That's my middle name actually," he said with a crooked smile. "Jim Terrible-Plan Hopper."

"I believe that." Joyce took a deep breath. "Okay, so we'll figure it out?"

"Yes."

"You're basically suggesting we wing it. Wing a relationship. A serious one. Just off the cuff, on the fly, flying by the seat of our pants, making it up as we go along."

He kissed her again, when he pulled back she was out of breath.

"I had to stop the cliches," Hopper explained.

“This isn’t going to work,” she said, still unsure but wanting it. A real relationship.

“Maybe not, but I wanna try.”

Joyce saw that tenderness in his eyes again. It was too much but she didn’t look away this time.

“Okay,” she felt herself saying.

“Okay.” He was calm but she caught the way his eyes lit up.

“But we figure out the hard stuff later, I can’t think about it tonight,” she said.

“Perfect. I love putting things off.”

Author's Note:

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